

Michael Torres James

1 Beautiful Island of Oahu would be the chosen place of my birth
2 and for what would be the more innocent times of my life. Early child-
3 hood memories when I was around three to seven years old my parents
4 would take me along with them to work. They owned and operated a small
5 fast food taco shop in Waikiki named Aztecas. My father Raul was from
6 Mexico and my mother stella from Colombia. They moved to Hawaii in the
7 late sixties. My father work in construction and would eventually save
8 ~~save~~ enough to open the fast food resturant. The customer line would stretch
9 around the corner and in the mayhem ^{they} would not notice as I would sneak
10 out and wonder off in the alley and cut through this hotel and play in
11 this small garden were I would catch Comilians and be amazed at how
12 they would change color when in my hand. We lived in the heart of Waikiki
13 on the 23rd floor of the building. At the top there was a pool where I
14 would teach myself how to swim. As a curious and unguided child I
15 would look over the railing with this certainty that if I jumped the
16 bushes below would break my fall. My curiosity would get the best of
17 me as one day I went as far as actually climbing over the railing and
18 ~~and~~ hanging on with one hand and about to let go when I was stopped
19 by some unseen force a warm feeling would compell me to climb back
20 over and shortly after we would move back, sorry I mean we would move
21 to the back of this Valley called Ainahina. this house was huge two
22 floors and a mini jungle for a yard. I would have no problem spending
23 all day in the yard but my mother was very strict and would only allow me
24 an hour of play and this would cause inner frustration. There were three other
25 kids on my street Tedy, shane and Maliea and I would envy them only because
26 their parents would let them play all day. This frustration would morph slowly
27 into hate and adding to this was the whippings from the belts, the cut water
28 hoses, the plastic wires.

1 Slowly but surely there was a rebellion brewing and it was only a matter of
2 time before this would culminate into some form of release in the distant
3 future. I was put in a very good private school named Holy Trinity and it would
4 be my experience of socializing with other kids other than the three on my
5 block. I would attend this school from first through sixth meanwhile my
6 parents sold the Wankik business and opened a new one in Klamuki. this
7 restaurant had a full dining room and bar so this even consumed more
8 of my parents free time and they were stressed from as a result. My
9 teacher was pretty much my friends at school and T.V. My friends
10 were always important they would help the loneliness. In 5th grade
11 my oldest brother Nestor was attending Kalani High and was constantly
12 getting into trouble by fighting, drinking and would eventually run away.
13 I would be mad at my brother for causing tears in my mothers eyes.
14 Ironically these would pale in comparison to the tears that would follow
15 as I would become a teenager. When my brother caused the tears I used
16 to tell her "Mom I will never be bad". Life sure is crazy! Around
17 fifth grade my bottle of suppressed anger would grow as a group of kids
18 would tease me about my ethnic background. Being the only Mexican
19 kid in school I was made fun of constantly until one day one day I
20 fought back with my word and eventually my ~~left~~ fist and this
21 taught me that there was power when anger turned to violence and respect
22 was the results. My father had a fall out with my uncle Martin and decided
23 to sell the business and move us to San Diego. We moved in the summer
24 after graduating from the sixth grade. This we be a new chapter in my
25 life. In San Diego My father opened up a wrecking yard and instead
26 of private school I would be enrolled in public school. Cornia JR high
27 and what an eye opener this experience would be. The kids were so
28 different, from hair styles, and uniforms so it was free dress.

1 The school consisted of black, mexican, and white kids. The black and
2 mexican kids were bused in from the poor neighborhoods. The teachers
3 were so overwhelmed they would give you a passing grade just to move you
4 along as part of the herd to society for an inevitable slaughter. I recently
5 read Mother Teresa's Biography were she shares a childhood memory of when
6 her mother brought home a basket of good apples. Calling her three children
7 three of them inspected how perfect and unflawed eachapple was, she then
8 placed a rotten apple in the middle of them and left the basket covered. Next
9 day the children were called to examine the state of the apples. Many of them
10 began to rot. The process was used to demonstrate the corrupting influence of
11 mixing with the wrong kind of people. At this juncture in my life this
12 analogy fits well. As I said earlier my friends would fill the loneliness and
13 be the only guidance other than the T.V. In one year I started to be
14 introduced to smoking weed, drinking, meth, and L.S.D. In ~~fifth~~ ninth grade
15 I would be off so academically and my attendance that I would be held
16 back to repeat ninth grade. I ran away from home and stay up for several
17 nights in a roll that my parents ended up sending me back to Hawaii to
18 live with my uncle Julian and I was enrolled at Kaiser high in hopes that
19 I would clean up my act. This lasted a year until my uncle had enough
20 and back to San Diego I went. I returned to point Loma and continued in
21 down the spiral of my own destruction. I thought that I was fooling
22 everybody and this became a way of life a double it made me feel good
23 when I fooled my teachers and parents but I was only fooling myself. At this
24 time I would meet the love of my young life the most ^{beautiful} girl named Common
25 Livers. We instantly fell in love inseparable she lived pretty far but that did
26 not stop us. She lived in a gang neighborhood named Shell Town. She had
27 a boy friend when we met but he was in jail and he was from this neighbor-
28 hood and many of his friends went to our school so we saw each other ~~occasionally~~
consciously.

1 Carmen's best friend named Sonia was dating a young man from our school
2 named Derek. Derek and I became best friend and Derek was becoming very
3 involved in a gang in his neighborhood Name Wop Town. Hanging around Derek
4 and tagging along with him gave me a feeling of respect and power and I
5 thought that Carmen might love me more as a result. There was zero
6 communication with my parents at this time. I had a lot of resentment
7 towards them for not being there for me. like not showing up for my
8 basketball game or surf contests or any hobbies that I got into. I knew
9 they loved me they just were horrible at expressing it and instead of
10 dealing with my drama they just ignored it hoping that one day it would
11 just go away. Maybe they figured it was a faze but little did they know I
12 was being nurtured by the underworld to become another statistic
13 another Mexican drug user/drug dealers. By this time my ego was very much
14 in control and would use my bottled up hate to fuel itself. One day in auto
15 shop I was telling a friend how sick I was of school and his reply was drop
16 but and so after class I walked off campus and that would be the last of
17 high school. I moved in with Derek and his single mom got a job at Rubio's
18 fish tacos got more involved in gang life and drug use on and off. Then
19 around seventeen my parents moved to Chula Vista and I did as well
20 and our relationship improved a tad bit. I worked at a 76 gas station and
21 saved enough for a car and I turned 18 and Carmen got pregnant and my
22 father said your a man that made a baby now you take care of it at this
23 time I was working for my Dad at a new resturant he opened named Tolucan's
24 So I rented a small apartment got a second job and sold drugs when the opportunity
25 would surface. I also would get my only DAD to add to the pressure. The
26 second ^{Job} was as a dishwasher and this really took a toll on me but it would
27 all be worth it when Michael JR was born January 22, 1993. My
28 baby boy would teach me of unconditional love.

1 My friends called me to back them up in a fight with some rivals and this
 2 episode would be so horrific that I decided I have to leave San Diego
 3 and so we sold what we had and the three of us were off to China in
 4 hopes of a better life for my new family. I remembered those innocent
 5 years as a child and I wanted my Son to experience that. Life was no walk
 6 in the park we struggled, I was twenty years old but my mind was cluttered
 7 from all the earlier abuse. I got a job at a fine dining restaurant named Nicolas
 8 Nicolas. This job consumed much time coupled with my selfishness of spending
 9 my free time surfing my girlfriend got very lonely this was my home but
 10 not hers she missed San Diego and in a short time would move back
 11 but I would stay my pride preventing me from going back on my word
 12 and knees to my ~~dad~~ was just not happening. When she left I felt relief
 13 now I could surf all I wanted but this relief quickly turned to sadness
 14 and the lowest, hard point of my life. I would cry it hurt so bad I felt
 15 so worthless, so much guilt for failing my Son my girlfriend until I
 16 decided to fly to San Diego to bring them back to Hawaii. But it was to
 17 late she had met some one else and there would be nothing in my power to change that.
 18 Back to Hawaii I flew with the broken pieces of my heart and fell into a deep
 19 state of depression. I avoided any female relationships, I just smoked weed, drank
 20 and went to work this would last for a year or so but it felt like eternity. My
 21 brother Nestor moved out and really helped me through these times and we both
 22 succeeded in talking our parents into moving out there with us in hopes of opening
 23 a family restaurant. My parents would decide on Maui they wanted no part of
 24 China to avoid my uncle. Steping off the plane on this new Island I could
 25 breath again and look myself in the mirror once again. My heart still missed
 26 Carmen but I would become social again and I would use the women that
 27 crossed my path in hopes of filling the empty space I felt within but no
 28 matter how many women I slept with this space would remain empty.

1 This new restaurant would be called Papas and Chiles in Kahalaui Maui. I worked
2 as a waiter and Bartender. I was twenty five years old and as I regained my sanity
3 I started feeling like proving to the world that I am no loser I wanted to prove
4 to my father, I wanted to show Carmen and maybe win her love back. I wanted
5 power and from what I have seen Money was the solution. this would be
6 another chapter unfolding in my life and this is when I would meet George
7 Cassas. George would party together I would set up the girls and he would rent
8 the rooms and buy the beers. I would help him unload some of his cocaine
9 through friends that I had just for fun. then I began holding some to make
10 a profit, next thing you know I'm making the product like Water out of
11 a ~~sea~~ faucet. The future was looking prosperous. George had a partner that
12 lived in Lahaina named Philippe Ruiz Castro. Philippe and I never really
13 clicked I felt that he was envious of the rate that I was growing.
14 George and I would eventually have a fall out and branch off our separate
15 ways. I was out of drugs and I had heard that Philippe and George were still
16 working together George moved to L.A. so I got Philippe's number and he hooked
17 me up with some cocaine but when I called a second time he refused saying
18 that he is not making any profit with me so directed me to George and so I called George and
19 we were off and running again strong as ever. I always tried to avoid Philippe
20 because the word was that he did sloppy business and was drawn a lot of
21 heat to him self. I warned George but George was in too deep, he had
22 invested in Philippe's restaurant and Philippe's tab was running high. George
23 calls me one day and asks me for a favor that would tie me into the power
24 ball case that was in the works. He asks me to lend some cocaine to
25 Philippe and he would replace it for me when he would send me my shipment.
26 My reply was that I really was uncomfortable with any contact with Philippe
27 and George said he will send a runner so that there would ^{be} no tracks leading
28 back to me. George would lose a shipment and was concerned that Philippe would.

1 Not pay what he owes. George decides to use me to get paid and at the same
2 time clear the debt that he owes me. So he calls me and ask if I will call
3 Philippe and ask for the money that he owes George and when I pick it up to
4 just hang onto it and keep it for myself and so I call Philippe and this phone
5 calls ties me into the Powerball Conspiracy. A few months after this
6 phone call everyone is indicted but me so I get nervous and move to
7 San Diego with this New girlfriend named Lorena. She was very wild
8 and together we would take the city nightlife by storm or maybe the
9 storm took us. We popped ecstasy pills snorted cocaine and just lost
10 ourselves in the night life. All this really took a toll on my physical
11 and my money started running low so I got back into the drug business to
12 support the life style. I would buy a kilo at a time and sell ounces at
13 a time and I would place the drugs under the passenger seat that would
14 end up swallowing up one that would later lead to my state arrest. I was
15 keeping an old neighborhood friend close named Nick Rodriguez. Nick was
16 a piece of work he had been in and out of prison and has an attempted
17 murder as one of his priors. At this time in my life I am 28 years of
18 age never been to jail except for a DUI but God knows that I have
19 been slipping through the cracks. Lorena and I have had some horrible
20 fights with some resulting violent. In 2001 we decided to move to a new
21 apartment and I would ask Nick if he could help me in moving so as a
22 early appreciation gesture I took him out to a night club and my girlfriend
23 calls my cell phone and is mad so I hung up on her and she is furious
24 and locks me out of the house when I come home. Its three in the
25 morning and now I'm upset so I find a way in through the garage and as
26 soon as I walk in she is throwing things at me so I jump back in
27 my car and am pulled over a few blocks away and the cop searches
28 my car because of Nicks parole condition and the search turns up

1 I am a user of powder cocaine that I had no idea was there but must
2 have been there for who knows how long. I eventually make bail and
3 try to piece my life together I get a job at Wells Fargo as a teller but
4 old habits die hard and my drug use continues. A couple of weeks
5 before my sentencing I get locked by myself and in the early hours
6 of the morning I walked into my bathroom and was so disgusted with
7 how I looked in the mirror tears flowed down my cheeks and I asked
8 God to help me find a way out of the mess that I created, my life style
9 was my prison and then I went to sentencing and the judge sentenced me
10 to six months in a half way house and ~~one~~ week in the half way house
11 God would answer my cry by being indicted in the LHM AIA Root
12 Conspiracy. This arrest would hit me hard for the second time in my life
13 my heart would feel like being ripped from my chest. I shattered into a
14 million pieces, my girlfriend left me in a couple of months my ten year son
15 doubled to 20 due to my state prior that I was in that moment.
16 time for. My mind began questioning my life. Was it over? What was it
17 all for? What was my purpose? I felt on the verge of insanity. How could I
18 bring an end to my suffering? How can I get out of this mess? I wanted
19 to come clean but not at the expense of someone else getting a longer
20 sentence. Pleading to 20 was not an option so I went to trial and after
21 being convicted my P.S.I would amazingly recommend 19 to 21 months
22 and I was so relieved but this would be short lived because two weeks
23 before my sentencing I would be indicted in the Power Ball Conspiracy.
24 the interesting thing is that the AIA root case was from 2000 to 2002 my state
25 case was in 2001 I had been sentenced for both of these and now I'm indicted
26 in a case that happen in 1999 to 2000 but at my sentencing these two cases
27 would put me at a higher criminal history points. Very early in the three
28 and a half years at F.O.C a miracle would transpire.

1 I began to feel remorse for all the lives that I directly and indirectly hurt
2 through my selfishness of needing more of everything. I felt deep compassion
3 for all the drug addicts who continually hurt themselves as I once did. I
4 wanted to understand why we chose suffering. I quickly learned that before
5 I can understand and help the suffering of others I must heal myself. I learned
6 that you cannot give what you don't have. In order to give a dollar you must
7 have one and you have to love who you are in order to love anyone else.
8 And if you want to bring peace to the planet you have to find your peace
9 within. You cannot heal the wounds of others until you heal yourself. I searched
10 for truth and read everything under the Sun that would assist the enlightenment
11 process and the material that was appropriate would gravitate to me through
12 some amazing synchronicities. The common thread was basically the same
13 in all the spiritual teachings. "Be still and know that I am God know your
14 self the answer lies within". Meditation would help to still the mind and
15 heal myself of my fears, my hurts, my regrets, and my guilt. Forgiveness was
16 the remedy but how does one really forgive? It is just a word how does a word
17 take away all the pain all the guilt that has become so ingrained as part of
18 the self? It was about clinging to the small self but this fear kept me hanging
19 on fear to know myself, fear of God, fear of letting go. It seemed to be a huge
20 sacrifice but is it a sacrifice to know yourself. This fear was of letting go
21 of my ego, the small conceptual self this identity that was given to me by my
22 peers a fallacy of who I was, I saw that the root of my suffering was my
23 perception that I was separated from everyone and everything and this
24 would explain my sadness in life my loneliness and this sense of lack would
25 be the reason there was never enough never satisfied always had to have
26 more looking for completion in illusions. This is why I always looked for
27 me number one even at the cost of others well being. Someone had
28 to lose for me to win.

1 I was worshiping false idols and they came in the forms of relationships,
2 money, material things. These illusions gave me momentary pleasure but the
3 effect was short lived and the sadness and emptiness would creep back in.
4 But this knowing would repeat itself and gently nudge go within there you will
5 find yourself, there you will find what you have been searching for your completion
6 lies with ME. As I forgave my pain body, my past I forgave others
7 for what I thought they did as I came to understand that they were
8 projecting their guilt onto me by their actions and if this affected me
9 the forgiveness was for myself and so every encounter is really a Holy
10 encounter. Now I understand forgiveness on a deeper level I forgive others
11 for believing in a separated state and if my forgiveness comes from a
12 place that affirms their wrong then my forgiveness come from a space that
13 says me being the better of the two will forgive. It is much deeper
14 to see the mistakes of others as missteps to see their error as correctable.
15 The people that push our buttons in life are showing us our guilt and so I
16 began to see them not as enemies but as friends and angles showing us the
17 areas that are in need of healing. Only through surrender would the
18 small self dissolve into the Universal Self that knows of its connection
19 to all other selves. I see now clearly that the process that I went through
20 at F.D.C was essential for my self realization. The betrayals, the being
21 torn from every that gave my life meaning, the pressure from the prosecutor
22 the two trials, the long sentence all were perfectly organized on a
23 high plane of understanding. One of the most bizar things happened at
24 my sentencing when I was asked what prison I wanted to attend I knew
25 I wanted Long Pac but the words that came out of my mouth were Terminal
26 Island. I did not understand why until arriving a Terminal Island. There is this
27 drug counselor named Cindy Circlesion and she is the conduit for growth
28 if one is sincere. Many through her she offer meditation, kundalini yoga, book

1 Studies open discussions and Friday night outside guests come in from
2 the spiritual community. My experiences throughout these past five years
3 have been precious, especially the last two at Terminal Island. I am
4 at a beautiful space within myself I have let go of my need to control
5 every little thing and know I feel much more in alignment with The All
6 that is. I trust the process for my highest good I have surrendered my guilt
7 of unworthiness of regrets and I simply stay focused with awareness in
8 the Now. In healing myself through forgiveness I give my life today
9 to be that of service as the Universe needs me. I now bring healing to
10 those who are open and to those who are not I simply accept them as divine
11 being that they are. I understand that some still chose to sleep as I
12 once did not so long ago. I ask the Courts and tax payers forgiveness
13 for the financial costs ^{that my} need for experience has brought, but these experience
14 were vital for my remembering of who I am. I know that I was sentenced
15 justly by what the Courts knew of me, my attorney prohibited me from
16 expressing myself so your honor simply saw another drug case another
17 Mexican drug dealer polluting the Islands showing no remorse, so I
18 now ask that you search your intuition once more by what has been expressed
19 through these words and I hope to have an opportunity to express myself
20 before the Courts. I also realize that on a deeper level I will be where
21 I am most needed. I know forgiveness is a word that you hear all the
22 time, I know I hurt people through my past actions and the only way
23 that I know to correct these wrongs is through my love, my examples,
24 my experience, and my understanding of what it feels like to be lost and
25 then found. The Journey to God is an awakening to the knowledge of what you are and
26 always will be, it is a journey without a distance to a goal that has never
27 changed.

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Sincerely
Mark J. Lee